

REMARKS

Currently, claims 1-8, 67-77, 79-86, 89-97, 101-110, 112-121, and 127-132 are pending in the above captioned application, including independent claims 1, 67, 101, 114, and 127. In the Office Action, the recital of the claims apparently inadvertently misstated the pending claims. For example, the Office Action failed to state that claims 122-126 were withdrawn as being directed to a non-elected invention in the response to the Restriction Requirement. Also, claims 1-8 were not addressed in the Office Action. In addition, the rejection of claim 74 was not discussed in the Office Action; however, for the purposes of this response only, Applicants assume that claim 74 is rejected under the same reasoning as claim 67 from which it depends.

In the Office Action, claims 67-71, 73, 75-77, 79-85, 92-97, 114-117, 120, 121, and 127-132 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,990,377 issued to Chen, et al. Chen, et al. discloses absorbent articles typically used in contact with skin, such as disposable diapers, feminine pads, panty liners, incontinence pads and the like. The absorbent articles are described as having a topsheet layer, or liner, next to the skin, with an absorbent core beneath designed to retain liquid, and a **liquid impervious backsheet that prevents leakage** and maintains the integrity of the product. See Col. 1, Rows 23-29, emphasis added.

In stark contrast, independent claims 1, 67, and 114 of the present application require that the absorbent sponge-like product comprises an outer cover that **allows water to pass therethrough**, said compressible substrate being enclosed by the outer cover. Furthermore, independent claim 127 of the present application is directed toward a method of making a sponge-like pad. As amended, the method of claim 127 comprises enclosing the stack in a **liquid pervious cover**. Thus, Applicants submit that

independent claims 67, 114, and 127 and all pending dependent claims are not anticipated by Chen, et al.

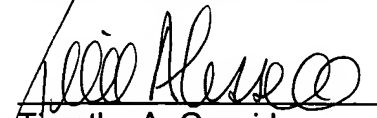
Also, in the Office Action, claims 68, 72, 86, 89-91, 101-110, 112, 113, 118, and 119 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,990,377 issued to Chen, et al. However, as stated above, Chen, et al. discloses absorbent articles having a topsheet layer, or liner, next to the skin, with an absorbent core beneath designed to retain liquid, and a liquid impervious backsheet that prevents leakage and maintains the integrity of the product. See Col. 1, Rows 23-29.

The liquid impervious backsheet is integral to the article disclosed in Chen, et al. In fact, Chen, et al. teaches away an absorbent sponge-like product comprising an outer cover that allows water to pass therethrough, said compressible substrate being enclosed by the outer cover, as required by independent claims 1, 67, and 114. As such, Applicants submit that claims 68, 72, 86, 89-91, 101-110, 112, 113, 118, and 119 are non-obvious in view of Chen, et al., and request favorable consideration and allowance of the pending claims.

Examiner Stephens is invited and encouraged to telephone the undersigned should she have any questions with respect to this response or if any other issues arise with respect to this application.

1/24/05
Date

Respectfully submitted,


Timothy A. Cassidy
DORITY & MANNING, P.A.

P.O. Box 1449
Greenville, SC 29602
(864) 271-1592
(864) 233-7342